The struggle against fascism and war -

past and present

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PANORAMA DDR

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More than 50 million people from 70 countries lost their lives before fascism was crushed in Europe and Asia in 1945. Twenty million of them were Russians and other Soviet people, 6 million were Polish, 1.7 million were Yugoslav, 600,000 French, 405,000 American and 375,000 British. Another 35 million were permanently disabled. People in Germany and in other countries also had to pay dearly for the policies of their governments who had plunged mankind into the holocaust of World War II. The military operations conducted on an area of 22 million square kilometres in 1939–45 spread death and devastation to an extent never before experienced. The fascist-provoked war destroyed 1,700 towns and over 70,000 villages in the Soviet Union and almost one million houses in France. Four hundred villages were razed to the ground in Greece and two-thirds of all livestock perished in Yugoslavia. Irreplaceable works of art were torn to pieces in air raids by the Nazi Luftwaffe on Britain and other countries.

Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg—each country drawn into this conflict had to make colossal sacrifices. The consequences are often felt to this day.

Three decades after the end of this most terrible of all wars the European security conference is nearing its successful conclusion and in Berlin, once the chief stronghold of Nazism, representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties from all over Europe are meeting to discuss ways of strengthening peace and security on

the continent. Within their ranks, the communists of the German Democratic Republic are increasing their efforts to help prevent another world war.

The Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), the Council of State, the Council of Ministers and the National Council of the National Front of the GDR declared in a Manifesto published to mark the 30th anniversary of our people's liberation from Nazi rule:

> "The legacy of the dead places a heavy responsibility on our shoulders. We must spare no effort to preserve the hard-won peace, and to enable democracy and social justice to triumph everywhere on the globe."

The lessons learnt from the past, an analysis of the current balance of forces and a look into the future show that this legacy can be carried out if all people of good will devote all their energies to this cause. The communists and all working people of the GDR will do their share as they have always done in the campaign for peace, democracy and social advance.

I. The lessons of World War II are still fresh in our minds

Unlike World War I and other previous military conflicts World War II was not only over territories and markets. The crucial question was whether fascism, that barbaric system flouting all fundamental human values and all achievements of human civilization, would succeed in ruling the world, enslaving hundreds of millions of free men and getting away with its acts of genocide such as the atrocities in Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Mauthausen and other concentration camps or so-called retaliatory actions against Oradour in France, Lidice in Czechoslovakia and Coventry in Great Britain.

The antifascist struggle united the people of all nations

Only outwardly was this a war between the Axis and the allies with fascist Germany, Japan, Italy and their satellites aligned against the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, France and other countries. In reality, the front ran across many countries and peoples. The German communists actively furthered the Allied cause by clandestine operations within the country and activities abroad. In France, 2,500 political exiles and 27,000 former men and officers of Hitler's **Wehrmacht** who had seen through the criminal designs of fascism joined the French resistance as members of the Free

Germany movement founded in 1943. In Greece, the Antifascist Committee of German Soldiers entered the Greek People's Liberation Army. German antifascists, many of them communists, were active against Nazism in Britain, Mexico, Denmark and other Allied countries as well as in neutral countries such as Sweden and Switzerland, with support from national organizations in these countries.

But there were also influential groupings, for example in the USA, who were by no means firmly opposed to fascism from the start. Harry S. Truman, later to become President of the United States, was one of them. Two days after Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union the **New York Times** quoted him as saying that "if we see that the Germans are winning we should help the Russians and if the Russians are winning we should help the Germans; may as many as possible kill themselves in this way."

Such an approach did not, however, meet with any popular support in the USA or in Europe. Both the people in countries attacked by the fascists and those facing the prospect of subjugation were pressing for a firm stand against fascism. Rather than bowing their neck to the yoke they dauntlessly defied the formidable fascist war machine. This determined stance, which was in the interests of world civilization, progress and democracy, testified to the strength of the masses. It did not fail to influence a number of bourgeois governments.

As the criminal and inhuman nature of fascism became increasingly apparent and the antifascist struggle gathered momentum the views propounded by Truman and others began to lose their hold on the ruling circles in western countries. Leading American businessmen, in a memorandum to the US Government in late 1941, explained the need to join forces with the Soviet Union in the struggle against fascism in sober and dispassionate terms: "Since Russia turned com-

munist the Soviets have never threatened our national interests and our way of life. By contrast, Hitler's mad policies have for two years pushed the world towards a state of slavery; our own existence as a free nation is in mortal danger."

The common desire of the peoples of the Allied coalition to end fascist crimes once and for all foiled all the attempts made by fascist leaders and by certain western politicians, especially in the closing stages of the war, to reach an understanding on an anti-Soviet basis. It also frustrated fascist plans to disrupt the Allied coalition and, by reversing the fronts, achieve certain imperialist aims after all.

The Soviet Union bore the main brunt

As is borne out by the number of casualties, the Soviet Union had to bear the main brunt of World War II. Throughout the war, between 60 and 70 per cent of Hitler's **Wehrmacht** were concentrated along the German-Soviet front, and these forces were the most efficient. Soviet troops turned the tide of the war in favour of the Allies at a time when the second front had not yet been opened in Western Europe. Tens of millions of people in many European and other countries drew from the heroism of the socialist Soviet Union the moral strength to resist the enemy successfully. This added to the democratic character of the antifascist struggle.

On 8 May 1945, representatives of Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allied powers, and their Japanese associates following suit in early September 1945. This was more than the end of years of bloodshed. The Soviet Union and all her allies, millions upon millions of fighters for democracy and humanity, including many in the countries of the fascist Axis, had inflicted a crushing defeat on a barbaric imperialist

ideology which, if it had emerged victorious, would have established an unimaginable reign of terror.

A lesson from the common struggle against fascism that is highly relevant to the present period is contained in a document published in early February 1975 by the Central Committee of the CPSU to mark the 30th anniversary of the Soviet people's victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45. It says: "The peoples and armies of the Allied states made a great contribution to the joint victory over the enemy. **The possibility of effective political and military cooperation between states with different social systems was proved in practice.**"

A changing world

The triumph of democracy in World War II and the resulting increase in the strength of the progressive forces opened a new chapter in the world-wide revolutionary advance towards peace, democracy and socialism.

Before 1945, the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic were the only socialist states, but after World War II there emerged a powerful world socialist system that gradually became a dominant factor in international affairs.

The overthrow of reactionary regimes in a number of European and Asian countries had opened up favourable prospects for the struggle of the masses for an order based on social justice. Successful revolutions in various countries and the further development of the labour movement heightened the general crisis of capitalism and speeded up the world-wide revolutionary process.

As things stand today, socialism affirms its superiority every day anew. The nine member nations of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA)–Bul-

garia, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Cuba, Mongolia, Poland, Rumania, the Soviet Union and Hungary, most of them poor countries before the socialist revolution—account for far more than one third of the world's industrial output although their share in the world's population and territory is less than 10 and 20 per cent, respectively.

Living socialism has radically transformed the international political situation since World War II. Because of its successful work world affairs are no longer dominated by a clique of imperialist magnates who once in their drive for ever fatter profits carved up the world between them and then sought to redistribute it, plunging the nations into an endless series of wars. The Soviet Union and the other states of the socialist community are staunch friends and helpers of all those striving for national dignity and independence. It is they who are keeping the imperialist aggressors in check, as strikingly illustrated by the failure of US aggression in Indochina. **The existence of the world socialist system and its policies have opened up the realistic prospect of preventing a global conflict.**

World socialism has helped the people in the former colonies to achieve independent nationhood. About half of the 138 member states of the United Nations acceded to independence after World War II. Many of these countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America have confidently embarked on a path of development they have chosen themselves. The collapse of the imperialist colonial system not only ended an abominable crime committed against hundreds of millions of people but lent added strength to the broad international anti-imperialist front of those fighting for peace and progress, against war, reaction and fascism.

Peace was made more secure

In the 30 years that have passed since the end of World War II the political scene has undergone far-reaching changes. The progressive forces, the broad masses in east and west now find it much easier than 40 years ago to wage a successful struggle for a lasting peace, for social advance, détente and security.

In marked contrast to the pre-war period it is no longer possible, because of the fundamental shift in the world balance of forces, to solve any problem of world-wide importance without, let alone against, the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community. As everybody can see for himself this has made peace on our planet more secure. Europe, the starting-point of both world wars, has experienced the longest period of peace in its history. While imperialism has still been able to unleash localized wars in other continents the might of world socialism has prevented them from degenerating into a new world war. Even so, nothing would be more erroneous than to believe that world peace could be safeguarded automatically.

Although doubtlessly kept within limits by the changes in the international situation, war and fascism continue to loom as a real threat, which has not yet been removed once and for all.

But it is possible to get rid of this threat if it is fully understood. A correct approach to history is essential to this understanding. The leader of the Communist Party of Germany, Ernst Thälmann, later murdered by the Nazis, expressed the views of the communists in these terms:

"Policy is current history. To understand the essence of policy it is necessary to try to capture the essence of history."

Three decades may be considered a relatively short period of time. Quite a few of the active fascists of the

'30s and '40s are still alive, and some are still engaged in sinister political machinations. Others may consider three decades a long period of time. About half of Europe's present population did not experience World War II and the reign of fascism consciously. To these people it may all seem to belong to a distant past far removed from the realities of today. But these events are neither distant nor unreal because they continue to affect the practical solution of political issues to this very day.

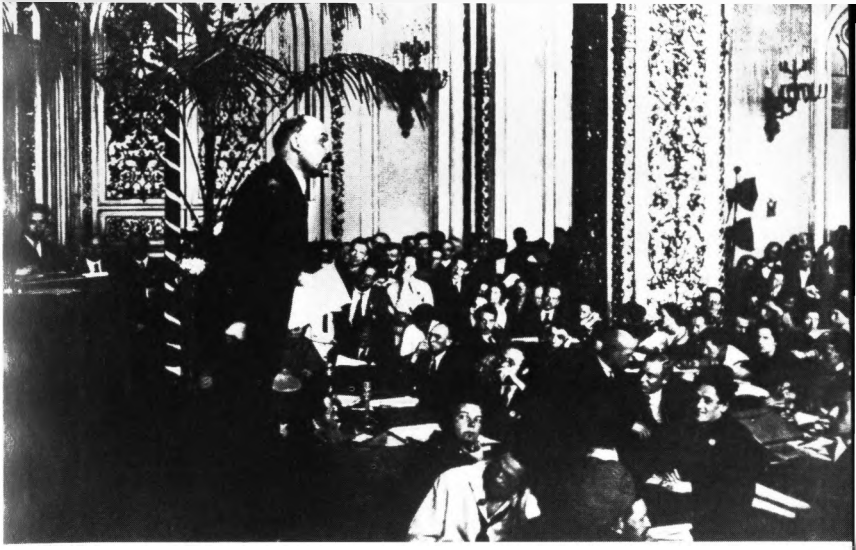
The truth cannot be repeated too often

There are good reasons for exploring the historical background and the intricacies of World War II and to turn this knowledge to account in the struggle for peace and security. For many years western countries have been flooded with mendacious "memoirs" and pseudo-scientific trash from the pens of fascist and imperialist authors. The fascist crimes are either passed over in silence or minimized. In those cases where this is impossible they are blamed on Hitler the "demon", on the inscrutable ways of providence or some other ungovernable forces. The defeats suffered by German or Japanese fascism and militarism are interpreted as victories thwarted only by "blind fate" or imponderable factors such as the severity of the winter and other such things. All these accounts are full of 'ifs' and 'buts', falsifications and accusations. But the reader will look in vain for even a semblance of self-criticism although the authors were involved in crimes that brought untold suffering to millions of people.

We all must act together to prevent the lessons of history from being forgotten, fascism from becoming respectable again and a new military conflict being triggered off. The constant preoccupation with the problems of the struggle against war and fascism, past

and present, will be very helpful in this effort. We have taken to heart what the great German playwright Bertolt Brecht said in 1952:

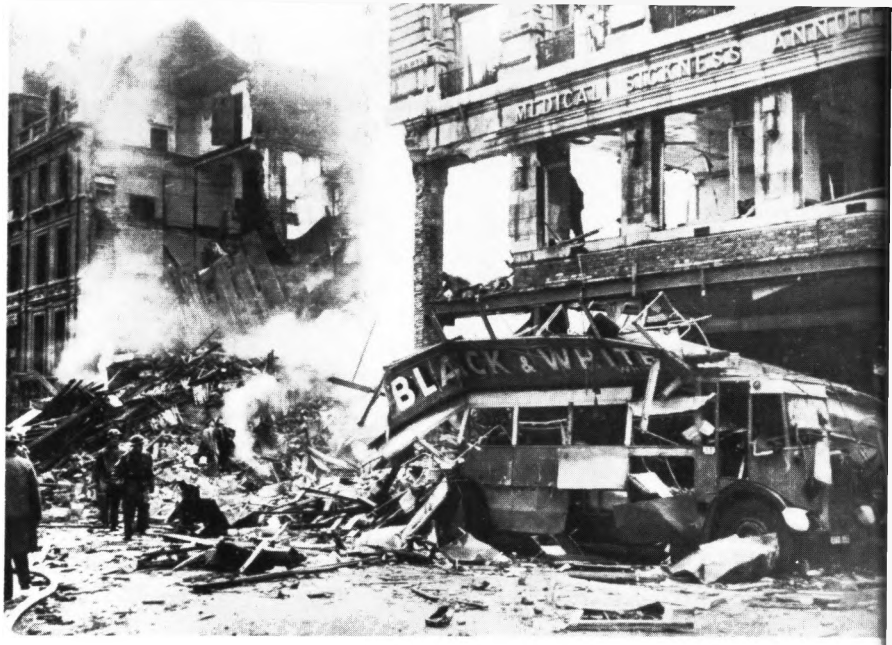
"Let us repeat over and over again what has been said a thousand times so that it may not have been said once too few!"



Addressing the delegates of the Third World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in 1921 Lenin said that to vanquish the forces of reaction it was necessary to have the sympathy of the masses. The Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in 1935 warned the nations of the world of impending war and called on all democratic forces to fight together against fascism, for peace, democracy and social advance. Seen on our photograph are leaders of Communist parties: Otto W. Kuusinen, Klement Gottwald, Wilhelm Pieck, Dmitri S. Manuilski (standing); Georgi Dimitrov, Palmiro Togliatti, Wilhelm Florin, Wang Ming (seated)

As soon as fascism had established its reign of terror in Germany it embarked on the relentless persecution of all democrats. Above: Ernst Thälmann, Chairman of the Communist Party, was shot from behind after 11 years of solitary confinement. Centre: The Social Democrats Magnus, Flesch, Giessecke, Braun, Ebert and Heilmann (from right to left) seen on their arrival at Oranienburg concentration camp in 1933. Below: The atrocities committed by the fascist hordes in the Soviet Union were on a vaster scale than in any other country invaded by Hitler's Wehrmacht. Seven million civilians were murdered in cold blood.

Resistance fighters from all countries of Europe risked their lives in the struggle against fascism and war. Above: Heinrich Rau (third from left) led the XIth International Brigade in 1937–38 to help prevent Franco setting up a fascist regime in Spain. After 1945 he held various senior posts until his death, playing a major role in socialist construction. Centre: German antifascists in the 7th Leningrad partisan brigade. Below: The Free Germany National Committee, founded near Moscow in 1943, united opponents of Hitler from all sections of the German people.



Ruins and rubble, untold suffering and misery were the legacy of Nazi rule. Starving people with nowhere to stay, mothers filled with despair and children wandering aimlessly about - these are the concomitants of war. Pictures are often more eloquent than words: Seen here are London after a raid by the Nazi air force and orphaned children fleeing from the horrors of war.

II. What is fascism?

Fascism is a bourgeois-reactionary form of rule. The imperialist bourgeois ruling class always resorts to fascism when it can no longer rule the people according to its wishes with traditional bourgeois-democratic forms. This is related to the existence and worsening of the general crisis of capitalism and the revolutionary developments which have fundamentally changed the relation of forces in the world.

The victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in the autumn of 1917 ushered in a new era in the history of mankind. Based on the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin there emerged on one sixth of the world's territory a completely new social system, a state differing fundamentally from all existing capitalist or feudal states. **The socialist Soviet state demonstrated to the whole of mankind that it is possible for the working class to seize power, to secure a life free from exploitation and oppression as well as growing prosperity for all and to pursue a foreign policy aimed at peace and security for all nations, big and small.**

Revolutionary upheavals also took place in other countries after 1917 as the contradictions inherent in bourgeois society became more severe and the October Revolution galvanized the masses into action. While these remained unsuccessful for a variety of reasons they revealed the general crisis affecting the capitalist order.

In Germany, big business began to throw its weight

behind the NSDAP, the Nazi party. In 1929 alone, the Nazis received 6.15 million Reichsmark from the political fund of the Association of Mining Interests, known as the "Ruhr treasure". As a result, this party rapidly gained in strength, its leader Adolf Hitler eventually being appointed Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933. Fascism had thus come to power in a country ranking among the leading nations with a share of 12 per cent in the world's industrial output. This economic strength, coupled with the regime's aggressiveness, presented a grave threat to world peace.

The Nazi party epitomized everything that was reactionary and anti-communist in German history and carried it to a pitch never reached before. It openly called for an invasion of Soviet Russia. (Hitler wrote in his **Mein Kampf:** "When we talk about territorial gains in Europe, the first thing we think about is Russia and the neighbouring countries under her thumb.") It banned the Communist Party and all other working-class organizations, threatening them with total obliteration. (Alfred Rosenberg, chief Nazi ideologist: "It is one of the foremost aims of the NSDAP to overcome and destroy the Marxist world outlook, and to liquidate its chief exponents.")

"To vote for Hitler is to vote for war!"

Like their comrades-in-arms in other countries the German communists, led by Ernst Thälmann, had strained every nerve to prevent the Nazis from seizing power. From the outset they had been under no illusions about the designs and objectives of the brownshirts.

At its VIth World Congress in 1928 the Communist International (an international association of communists founded in 1919) adopted a programme and a number of other documents defining fascism, on the

basis of experience gained in Italy, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere, as the **"terrorist dictatorship of big business"**, as a **"form of direct dictatorship by the bourgeoisie"**. The VIth World Congress pointed out that a period of new bitter class struggle was imminent and that the Communist parties were obliged to mobilize the masses against fascism.

The KPD fought its battle to the best of its abilities under the slogan "To vote for Hitler is to vote for war!" But it was not strong enough. **It is necessary to bear in mind how much suffering the world and the German people would have been spared if the words of the communists rather than those of reactionary demagogues had been heeded.**

In line with the promise Hitler had given to his paymasters the Nazis embarked on a ferocious campaign of repression against the communists in 1933. By mid-1935 more than half of the KPD's 422 leading officials—219—had been detained and condemned, and 24 had already been murdered. But the fascist reign of terror was not only directed against communists. All those offering resistance suffered violent persecution. In March 1935, 715 Protestant churchmen were arrested because they had issued a manifesto against fascist racial policies. Eminent scholars, authors and artists such as Albert Einstein, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, and Marlene Dietrich were forced into exile. All sections of the population were affected by fascist barbarity, though in varying degrees.

Fascism—an open, terrorist dictatorship

Nazi tyranny in Germany had revealed the extent of the danger presented by fascism. It posed a threat to peace, to the Soviet Union as the first socialist country, to all progressive forces and, indeed, to the whole of mankind. New efforts were needed to head off this

danger before it was too late. An exact theoretical and scientific definition of fascism was essential for finding the most effective means of combating it.

The Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov did much to defeat fascism ideologically. Put on trial by the Nazis in the autumn of 1933 for allegedly having set the Reichstag on fire he rose above his role as defendant to attack the leaders of the Third Reich in a direct confrontation. Dimitrov unmasked the fascists as helpmates of the most aggressive imperialist forces bent on plunging the world into a terrible holocaust. Accordingly, the Executive Committee of the Communist International defined fascism in December 1933 as

> **"the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital."**

The VIIth World Congress of the Comintern in 1935 confirmed this definition, which exposed the intrinsic nature of fascism, by generalizing the lessons learnt during the rise and rule of fascism, especially in Germany and Italy. Fascist rule was characterized as a form of imperialist exercise of power.

Underlying this definition were teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, notably Lenin's theory of the state and the theory of imperialism as an utterly reactionary system. It pointed to the awesome danger emanating from fascism but also laid bare the weakness and decay of the imperialist system. No longer able to maintain its power with the traditional means of a nominally democratic and liberal government, the latter was forced to throw off its mask and resort to open terrorism.

The communists and the Soviet Union were the only ones to make a clear assessment of fascism and to submit proposals for the fight against it—both at this stage and later on. This not only showed who was the

chief opponent of this regime but also proved that Marxism-Leninism alone, and historical materialism in particular, was capable of judging socio-political concepts and developments correctly.

The practical policies of the Hitler regime in Germany fully confirmed the definition of fascism given by the communists. Between 1932 and 1938 the share of the German **haute bourgeoisie** in the national income rose from 19.1 to 28 per cent. The profits of the giant chemical firm IG Farbenindustrie AG went up from 48 million Reichsmark in 1932 to 363 million in 1939. The process of monopolization went on apace. **On the eve of World War II the largest German companies controlled 85 per cent of all capital stock.** On the other hand, some 700,000 craftsmen as well as countless retail dealers had been forced out of business at the outbreak of the war although the Nazi party had pretended to champion their interests. The exploitation of the workers attained unparalleled proportions. Between 1934 and 1938 the incidence of occupational diseases and industrial accidents increased by 71 per cent. Developments in other fascist countries followed much the same pattern.

The predatory wars conducted by Nazi Germany and her allies, especially the invasion of the Soviet Union, removed the last doubts as to the rapacious, aggressive nature of fascism.

How to recognize fascism today

While fascist rule took various forms in the different countries before 1945 (the Jews were nowhere persecuted as savagely as in Nazi Germany) and the views held by fascist organizations today differ in many ways (though often only on tactical grounds) the fact remains that fascism has many common features by which it is clearly recognizable. Fascism

- is always clearly directed against the Soviet Union and against communism;
- is always subservient to the aims of the most reactionary and aggressive forces in a given country;
- is a bloody reign of terror against all those holding different opinions, especially against the leaders and organizations of the working class;
- liquidates—as a rule—the bourgeois parliamentary system which, although far inferior to socialist democracy, allows the people a certain latitude in expressing their political opinions;
- destroys the real political and social gains of the masses as far as possible;
- occasionally resorts to demagoguery to establish some measure of popular support, especially by giving alms to sections of the population that might serve as a pillar of the regime;
- attempts to modernize economic and social relations to provide more favourable conditions for domestic and foreign monopoly capitalism.

The mass media in the west often describe political conditions in certain newly independent countries of Asia and Africa as fascist, especially if these countries have embarked on an anti-imperialist path of development. This is adduced from the fact that these states are without a Parliament, have only one political party or lack the trappings of western-style democracy. This is no more than a propaganda device designed to mislead public opinon. The fact remains that fascism is characterized by the totality of the distinguishing features listed above, the first three being the most important.

III. The main force of the antifascist resistance struggle

From its scientific analysis of fascism, the VIIth World Congress of the Communist International also drew the conclusion that the victory of fascism was not inevitable but could be prevented. Therefore, the Congress decided that the foremost immediate task of the international labour movement in the struggle against fascism was to weld together all those committed to democracy and peace into a broad **antifascist popular front** on the basis of **united working-class action.**

The fight against the mounting danger of war was the overriding objective in the establishment of a popular front. In his address to the VIIth World Congress the Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti carefully analysed the danger of an imperialist world war which, as he pointed out, chiefly emanated from Nazism. Whereas it is still widely claimed in western countries that the fascist takeover in Germany and the outbreak of World War II were a "twist of fate" impossible to predict and forestall, Palmiro Togliatti made it abundantly plain that the communists did not believe in an uncontrollable fate. Today the words he uttered in 1935 sound almost prophetic: "No one should be in any doubt that the impending war, even if it starts as a war between two major imperialist powers or as a war of some major power against a small country, will inevitably tend to turn into a war against the Soviet Union."

Unlike Mr. Truman and company the communists had no doubts about the outcome of such an adventure.

A cautionary note had been sounded already at the XVIIth Congress of the CPSU in 1934 in a statement which has remained characteristic of the Soviet Union's general approach to international affairs to this day:

"Whoever desires peace and seeks to enter into businesslike relations with us can always count on our support. But those who might attempt to attack our country . . . will meet with a crushing defeat. The gentlemen of the bourgeoisie will only have themselves to blame if some governments dear to them which still by the grace of God firmly hold the reins of government will be missing on the day after such a war."

The outcome of World War II fully confirmed this very accurate assessment.

The success of the popular front

The decisions of the VIIth World Congress were quickly put into practice by the Communist parties of all countries. The first popular fronts came into being in 1935–36, at first as public movements and later on as coalition governments, notably in France and Spain.

At the party conference in Brussels in October 1935 and at the party congress in Berne in January 1939 the German communists launched various actions towards the establishment of a united antifascist front in Germany which, unfortunately for the nations of the world, met with only modest success. The main reason was the stubbornly anti-communist stance of the right-wing social democrat leaders.

Even though the popular front policy in Germany and Italy did not produce the results that had been hoped for and World War II could not be prevented the fact remains that it proved effective in countering any further spread of fascism. The relatively strong fascist groups operating in France and other West European

countries faced a mounting tide of resistance with the working class and other sections of the people forming a broad united front. The concerted action of the antifascist forces aligned in the popular front made it possible to isolate the fascist groups in Western Europe to a large extent and to prevent them seizing power. Before the outbreak of World War II, international fascism was thus dealt a major blow that put it in a much less favourable position for its wars of aggression.

The popular fronts also rendered invaluable services in paving the way for the establishment of broad antifascist fronts that were quick to emerge in all countries invaded by the fascists and contributed significantly to the eventual defeat of fascism.

In most countries the united antifascist fronts involved broad sections of the population, including communists and liberals, workers and industrialists, Christians and atheists, artists and churchmen. There was only one condition for joining such a front: a grim determination to do everything for the destruction of fascism.

A broadly-based united antifascist front has remained the most effective means of combating fascism politically to this very day. It was a united front comprising communists and patriotic officers as well as middle-class people that swept away the fascist Caetano regime in Portugal on 25 April 1974.

Soviet foreign policy—a policy of peace

No anti-communist and anti-Soviet propaganda, however vicious and slanderous it may be, will ever be capable of erasing the fact **that the first political step taken by the socialist Soviet state after the revolution in November 1917 was an appeal to the world to end the murderous war immediately and unconditionally and to conclude a lasting peace.** During 58 years this idea

has remained the supreme principle of Soviet foreign policy.

Acting in the spirit of this policy of peace the USSR has, right from the beginning, taken the view that the two world systems—socialism and capitalism—should not be locked in a permanent war but that their relations should be based on the basic Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence. Georgi V. Chicherin, the first Soviet people's commissar of foreign affairs, aptly described this principle in these words: "In the current historical epoch which makes possible the parallel existence of the old system and of a rising new social order it is a matter of urgent necessity to ensure economic cooperation between the states representing these two systems of ownership in the interests of overall economic construction."

This did not, however, signify any change in the foreign policy of these countries, which remained anti-Soviet in character. Whatever conflicts there might have arisen between them (e.g. over the distribution of the spoils of World War I) the ruling circles in the capitalist world were united by their common anti-Soviet and anti-communist ideology in their endeavour to save their social system at all costs. From their point of view it was necessary (and their attitude has remained basically unchanged to this day)

- to isolate the socialist Soviet Union by all means and, ultimately, do away with it;
- to restrict the influence of the revolutionary organizations of the working class and its allies supporting the Soviet Union, notably the communists, and, if possible, to liquidate and destroy them;
- to put a new façade on the largely discredited capitalist system, to make it attractive in an attempt to shield the working people from the influence of socialist ideas, to exploit and plunder them on a still larger scale.

These objectives were pursued most ruthlessly by the ruling circles in those countries where fascism had seized power. This greatly increased the risk of another imperialist war being unleashed. Faced with this situation the Soviet Union, as outlined in a decision of the CPSU Central Committee adopted in December 1933, laid special stress on the intensification of its efforts

to set up a system of collective security in Europe that would nip a fascist war of aggression in the bud.

Moving towards such a security system the Soviet Union entered into treaties of mutual assistance with a number of countries (France, Czechoslovakia) in 1934 and 1935. Anxious as it was to exploit the slightest opportunity to strengthen peace the USSR even joined the League of Nations in 1934 although this organization had also proved an instrument of anti-Soviet policy and had shown little regard for the interests of the peoples.

However, the ruling quarters in major capitalist countries, especially in Britain, were not even ready at this stage to consider the proposals put forward by the Soviet Union for the establishment of a collective security system in Europe nor to form an effective alliance against Nazi Germany with it. Although there was more than one opportunity for them to do so they did nothing to prevent Hitler's Germany from rearming and annexing other states. True to their anti-Soviet aims these quarters hoped to direct the aggressive designs of fascism towards the East. Ex-President Herbert Hoover wrote in the **New York Herald Tribune** on 27 October 1938:

"I am convinced that neither Germany nor the other fascist powers want to go to war with the western democracies as long as these democracies do not hamper the drive of fascism towards the East." What the word "East" means here needs no explanation.

Mr. Hoover and those sharing his views had to re-

cognize soon that they had misjudged Hitler and the forces backing him. As early as 1933 he had explained his strategy to the President of the Danzig Senate, Rauschning, in these words: "Soviet Russia is a tough nut to crack. I will hardly be able to deal with it first."

When in the spring of 1939 the West European countries were threatened more and more directly by Nazi Germany, London and Paris at last brought themselves to accept repeated Soviet offers for talks in Moscow on coordinated measures against the potential aggressor in Europe.

But the western powers did not put all their cards on the table. Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, instructed his ambassador in Washington on 28 March 1939, i.e. in the early stages of the Moscow talks, to inform the US government **"that the negotiations with the USSR were not conducted with the intention of agreeing on fundamental cooperation with it."** While representatives of Britain and France were stalling for time in their talks with the Soviet Union secret Anglo-German negotiations opened in London. Britain declared her readiness to withdraw the guarantees she had extended to Poland and Rumania in the event of fascist aggression and to induce France to dissolve her alliance with the Soviet Union provided that Germany was prepared to reach a "compromise" with the West.

Unimpressed by these proposals the Hitler clique felt that it was not even necessary to make any verbal concessions to the western powers. The policy of "appeasement" practised vis-à-vis the Nazis, especially by Britain, strengthened the ruling imperialist circles in Germany in their belief that Western Europe would be an easy prey and the conquest of these territories enable them to embark on the invasion of the Soviet Union with added strength.

In this situation, which held grave dangers for European and world peace, the Soviet Union submitted new far-reaching proposals to the representatives of

Britain and France in mid-August 1939. Their purpose was to coordinate military action with a view to precluding fascist aggression or, if this were no longer possible, to nip it in the bud. These proposals were turned down like those made previously.

In view of the attitude adopted by the ruling circles in Britain and France the security interests of the USSR left it with no other choice but to accept a German proposal for the conclusion of a 10-year non-aggression pact. This afforded the Soviet Union a reprieve of almost two years during which to strengthen her defence capability in preparation for an impending invasion by Nazi Germany. German imperialism could thus be crushed more quickly and millions of people were spared still greater suffering.

It was largely due to the policy of "appeasing" the Nazis and turning down the proposals of the USSR for a curb on Europe's potential aggressor that fascism was ultimately able to plunge the world into the second global conflict. Shortly before he had been elected Prime Minister in 1945 Clement R. Attlee had to admit: "If we had accepted the Soviet proposals at the time we would have been spared World War II."

It is to be hoped in the interests of world peace, détente and security, notably in Europe, that the non-socialist countries will become convinced once and for all that the foreign policy of the USSR and of the entire socialist community is consistently directed towards the defence of peace. **All historical experience shows that every opponent of war and fascism can always count on the Soviet Union and her socialist allies as a reliable partner and ally no matter what ideological or other differences may exist between them.**

Socialism and peace belong together

The great heroic struggle which the entire Soviet people fought unaided against the fascists certain of success and steeled in battle rapidly thwarting their **Blitzkrieg** strategy, is too well known to be discussed here in detail. Without detracting from the merits and sacrifices of others it is an incontrovertible fact that **World War II was decided militarily neither in the deserts of North Africa nor in Normandy, neither on the Siegfried line nor by the criminal decision of the US to drop atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The decisive battle was fought in eastern Europe where the Red Army crushed the Nazi Wehrmacht.**

The greatness of the communists' resistance struggle against fascist rule is also well-known and well-documented. No matter how much ink is spilled by bourgeois authors to refute this historical truth they cannot blot out the facts. And here again: Without detracting from the merits of any one party, movement or individual in the fight against fascism the plain fact is that **the communists made the greatest contribution to the struggle against fascism and that they suffered more than anyone else.**

About half of all members of the Communist Party of Germany lost their lives in the battle against fascism. Approximately one million of them languished in Nazi jails and concentration camps. In France, 1,250 communists were arrested on 24 January 1941 for having offered resistance to the German occupants, another 1,647 were detained on 10 February, 1,778 on 7 March and 2,098 on 9 April.

It is only logical that the communists are in the forefront of the battle against fascism and war, for peace and security because they champion socialism-communism, a social system

- which needs peace to thrive and accomplish its humanistic objective of ensuring prosperity and so-

cial security for all and giving each individual every opportunity to realize all his potentialities;

- in which there are no forces making a profit out of arms production and war. Any misuse of the state and the economy to prepare for and unleash wars of aggression is ruled out by public ownership of the means of production, which prevents the pursuit of private profit, and the fundamental socialist principle of distribution as expressed in the formula "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his work";
- in which human rights and genuine democracy are guaranteed for the working people and put into effect in everyday life, something impossible to achieve in any bourgeois state despite all affirmations to the contrary. For example, which system really guarantees a human right as essential as the right to work?;
- which is the most loyal friend and ally of **all** peoples fighting for their freedom and independence and of the national revolutionary forces. Each people or country hit or menaced by imperialist aggression has always been able to rely on the solidarity and aid of the socialist community and, first and foremost, of the Soviet Union. Let me recall here only the most recent examples of effective aid to Vietnam and the Arab states.

The communists were the first to warn the public of the fascist menace. This was not because they were the chief target of fascist tyranny but because communists take up arms wherever the interests of the peoples are at stake, where it is necessary to stand up for peace, social progress and justice. Communists do not risk their lives, which are dear to them, for nothing.

Anti-communism does not benefit the masses

The communists were the first to issue a warning against fascism because their Marxist-Leninist world outlook enabled them to realize before anyone else the gravity of the danger mankind was facing. They warned the Jews against the anti-Semitic crimes the Nazis were expected to commit, and this at a time when many a Jewish capitalist still believed he could come to terms with the Nazis in some way or another. The communists warned the public in the West European countries of the dangers of fascism, where it was widely held that Hitler would not attack them or, in the event of occupation, Germany as a "civilized" country would respect the "rules of the game".

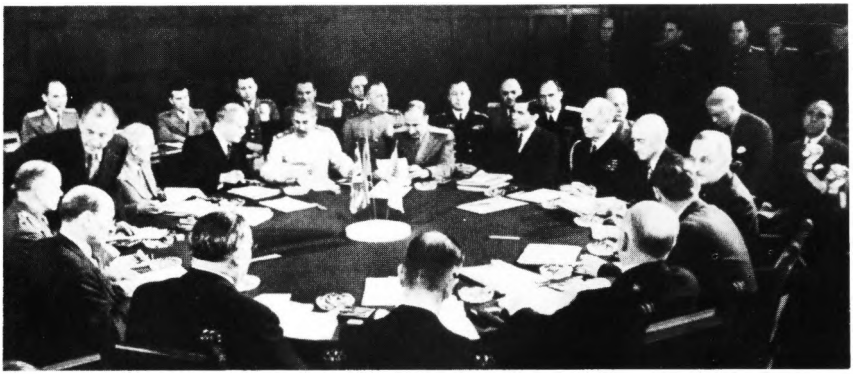
All historical experience shows that anti-communism and **anti-Sovietism only serve the interests of a handful of arms profiteers who stop at no crime to achieve their inhuman ends, whose readiness to commit any aggression jeopardizes the very existence of other peoples. But anti-communism and anti-Sovietism have never been to the benefit of the masses.**

Anti-communism and anti-Sovietism have proved incapable of checking the rapid advance of the world communist movement and the strengthening of the socialist community rallied around the Soviet Union. This will remain so in future. The sooner these outworn doctrines are thrown overboard the better for the normalization of the international situation, for the struggle of the working people in the imperialist countries for their political and social objectives.

Nothing can destroy the morale of the communists—neither terrorism nor scorn. Even in difficult situations they tend to look at the social realities quite dispassionately. This explains how it was possible in October 1941, when Hitler boastfully declared that Soviet Russia had been definitively knocked out never to rise again (a view shared by certain western governments), that

The long-desired victory. First of all, Soviet soldiers freed the inmates of concentration camps and prisons. With Berlin still the scene of fierce fighting in April 1945 Soviet soldiers distributed warm meals among the starving population in the liberated areas.

A victory parade was held in Moscow on 24 June 1945 by members of the heroic Soviet Army to celebrate the defeat of the Nazi regime (above). The leaders of the three Allied Powers – the USSR, Britain and the United States – met in Potsdam in mid-1945 to define the principles governing the establishment of a peace-loving, democratic German state (centre). A few weeks later the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg began its trial of the major fascist war criminals (below).



A historic moment: Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, previously leaders of the Communist and Social Democrat parties, shaking hands after the founding of a united working-class party, the SED, in Berlin in 1946.

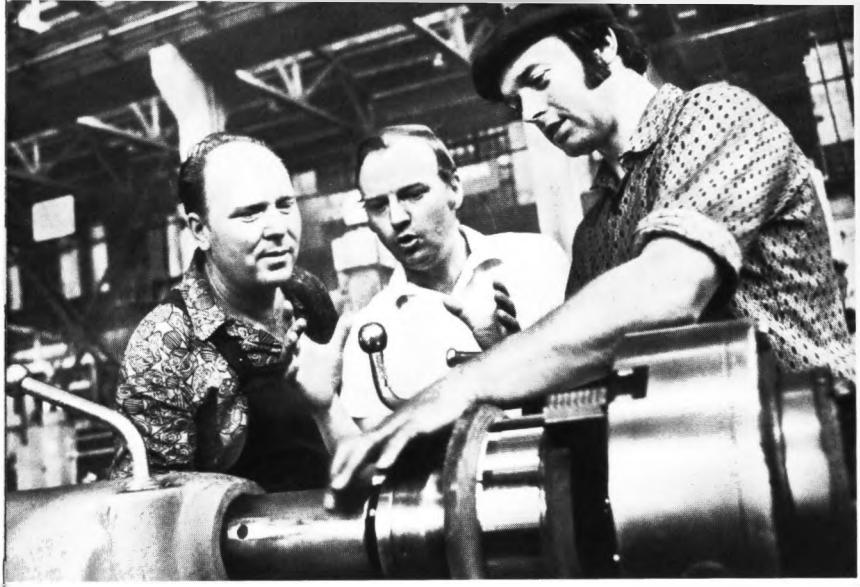
The five political parties in the GDR and the working people's organizations set up a closely knit antifascist-democratic bloc to build a new social system in a combined effort.

7 October 1949: proclamation of the German Democratic Republic. The antifascist Wilhelm Pieck was elected President by a unanimous vote. The great event was acclaimed with enthusiasm throughout the country, especially among the young generation united in the FDJ.

In the democratic land reform the estates of the big landowners were confiscated and parcelled out among the peasants. The Soviet Union rendered every conceivable support, the first 1,000 Soviet-made tractors arriving in the GDR in 1949.

Adolf Hennecke, coalface worker at the Karl Liebknecht colliery in Oelsnitz, Erzgebirge region, produced 24.4 cubic metres of coal in a special shift on 13 October 1948, topping his average output by 287 per cent. This marked the beginning of a compaign for greater efficiency and innovation now involving millions of workers.

The democratic educational reform flung the doors of universities and colleges wide open to the children of workers and farmers.



Mutual visits by workers are characteristic of the increasingly close relations between the socialist countries. I. F. Yegorkin, Hero of Labour from the Soviet town of Donetsk (left), is seen here giving valuable advice to Klaus Kursawe and Jürgen Mund from the GDR.

Extracting a tooth is no longer a painful operation with this modern set of equipment. Eleven medical specialists and 50 other staff at the new health centre in Karl Marx Stadt's largest new residential area ensure a high standard of health care.

The social welfare programme adopted by the Eighth SED Congress is being put into practice step by step with tangible results. Ever more cheap and well-appointed flats, kindergartens and service establishments are built to make life easier and more beautiful for the working people.

Tourists seldom fail to visit the Soviet War Memorial in the GDR capital, Berlin.

As a token of the indestructible friendship between their countries the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Leonid I. Brezhnev, and the First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, Erich Honecker (right), pay homage to the glorious Soviet Army and its act of liberation. Seen on the left is Willi Stoph, Chairman of the GDR Council of State.

the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany addressed an appeal to the German people and the German armed forces saying that **"this war is a lost cause for the German people. Hitler's defeat is inevitable. There is no other way out for the German people but to end the war. But to end the war Hitler must be overthrown. And woe betide our people if they tie their fate to Hitler's to the last."**

Communists will always fight with unbending courage for what they think is right, and this not for their own sake but for the benefit of all. In 1936–37, for example, communists from all parts of the world rushed to Spain to join the International Brigades, firmly determined to save the Spanish republic from fascism at the risk of their lives.

Resistance under the most difficult conditions

Agony and death—what else was there in store for the communists who worked indefatigably to save others from ruin amid bloodshed and terror in the darkest chapter of German history? And yet, throughout the whole of this bitter war the Nazis did not succeed in exterminating the communists in Germany. Although ruthlessly hunted down by the brown-shirted butchers the communists remained the strongest antifascist force in Hitler's Reich.

Even under the most difficult conditions they organized international resistance, for example in Auschwitz, one of the most horrible Nazi concentration camps. Clandestine groups of Belgian, German, French, Austrian, Polish and Czechoslovak prisoners were set up there, most of them led by communists. In 1943 they united into an international organization which also involved social democrats and people without party affiliations. This clandestine organization gathered and passed on information designed to infuse the prisoners

with fresh courage and prepared for actions by which the inmates hoped to liberate themselves. Communists who survived the wholesale slaughter held or still hold leading positions in socialist countries.

Communists played a key role in what was probably the biggest resistance organization in Germany during the Nazi era, the **Rote Kapelle** (red orchestra) as it was called by the Gestapo. This organization, which operated for many years until 1942, reflected the scope of antifascist resistance which the communists had always felt should be on the largest possible scale. Along with communists it included social democrats, liberals and unaffiliated people, workers and officers from Göring's staff, clerical workers and artists, men and women of various age groups.

Towards the end of the war bourgeois forces began to devise plans to get rid of Hitler. Before undertaking an attempt on Hitler's life on 20 July 1944 Colonel Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg warned that the putsch would be doomed to failure if it were to be staged without the communists. As for himself, he had got into touch with leading communists a few weeks before. But Stauffenberg's warnings went unheeded. His fellow-conspirators Carl Goerdeler and Ludwig Beck gained acceptance for their anti-communist views. All those involved in the 20 July plot had to pay for this attitude with their lives. Hitler remained in power to the bitter end.

The fate of many a communist who defied death to serve the common antifascist cause of the people has remained unknown to the present day.

The communists were those worst hit by the fascist reign of terror until the end of World War II. Even now, their struggle against reaction, fascism and war makes them the chief targets of persecution and oppression. In Chile, South Africa and other countries the witchhunt continues, the methods employed often being reminiscent of the Dark Ages. But no matter how many of

them may fall there are always new fighters to take their place. The international communist movement is growing stronger and stronger. Now as before, the world communist movement as the staunchest champion of working people's interests spearheads the struggle for peace, security and equal cooperation between states with different systems, and the campaign against fascism and war. **The meeting of European communist and worker's parties due to be held in Berlin shortly after the 30th anniversary of Nazi Germany's defeat will produce fresh proof that communism is the most powerful social force of our era, a force increasyingly pushing the development of human society in the direction of progress.**

IV. Pulled up by the roots

An organization called **Free Germany National Committee** was founded near Moscow in mid-1943 by communists, former members of the **Wehrmacht** who had changed their minds in captivity, and other patriotic Germans. The establishment of the committee was a logical consequence of the struggle the Communist Party of Germany was waging for a broad united front against fascism. It drew on the best traditions of German history, especially the proud record of the German Left which had for decades fought unremittingly against chauvinism and reaction in Germany. The Free Germany National Committee brought together people of varying political persuasions, ranging from dedicated communists to members of the middle classes who had once believed in Hitler and his works. Owing to its wide compass the movement rapidly gained influence among Germans of different political hues both in Germany itself and in other countries. The result was a noticeable increase in the number of resistance operations in the hinterland and of front-line deserters. 56 officers and 967 men of the Nazi Wehrmacht assigned to defend the Poznan fortress went over to the Red Army on a single day in February 1945. However, the German antifascists did not succeed in hastening the end of the war, which was fought to the very last. Berlin fell only after ten days of bitter street fighting.

Meeting in Yalta in February 1945, the leaders of the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain

agreed in principle on the treatment of Germany after the war. A statement issued by the three heads of government said that they would take such measures "as may be necessary to the future peace and safety of the world." This included the destruction of German militarism and Nazism.

The road to social progress lay open

For decades the German Left had struggled to end the rule of big business, to secure democracy and social progress in Germany in line with the teachings of the great Germans, Marx and Engels. Now that the country had been liberated by the Soviet Union it was faced with the historic opportunity for a decisive breakthrough.

The communists and other antifascist forces got down to work in all parts of Germany to seize this opportunity. A **manifesto issued by the KPD Central Committee on 11 June 1945** said: "It is necessary to clear away not only the rubble in the destroyed cities but also the reactionary rubble of the past. Let us rebuild Germany on a solid foundation to prevent a third holocaust from being provoked by the disastrous policy of imperialism."

The manifesto then listed the **ten main points of an action programme for the establishment of a peace-loving democratic German state.** These were identical with the main principles for the future development and treatment of Germany as they had been decided upon by the leaders of the USSR, the USA and Britain in the well-known **Potsdam Agreement** signed on 2 August 1945. These included the following:

- Destruction of the Nazi party, of all its affiliated and supervised organizations and institutions;
- Provision for safeguards to prevent this party and its institutions ever being revived again;

- Prevention of all Nazi and militarist activity or propaganda;
- Reorganization of German political life along democratic lines;
- Destruction of the excessive concentration of economic powers of German imperialism as exemplified in particular by cartels, syndicates, trusts and other monopolistic arrangements.

It soon became apparent that the Potsdam Agreement was not fulfilled in the same way in the four occupation zones. In the American and British zones, and partly in the French-occupied zone (these three zones comprising the territory of what is now the Federal Republic of Germany) the occupation authorities began to depart step by step from Allied agreements. Certain quarters of German imperialism, which had only just been crushingly defeated, and the western powers moved closer and closer together. Ultimately, this imperialist conspiracy led to the restoration of German imperialism and the partition of Germany when the Federal Republic was proclaimed in September 1949. This state not only failed to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Agreement but went as far as banning the Communist Party of Germany once again a few years later.

In the Soviet-occupied zone, which became the German Democratic Republic in October 1949, the Potsdam Agreement was strictly fulfilled. The policy adopted towards former Nazis was not one of vengeance. Rigorous punishment was administered only to war criminals and Nazi activists if these had not escaped justice by fleeing to the West. The bulk of the ordinary members of the Nazi party (which one out of 6 or 7 adult Germans had joined), who had not been directly involved in any crimes, were given an opportunity to take part in the reconstruction effort but were denied public office or employment in key sectors of national life such as education.

Dedicated antifascists who had survived Nazi rule in jail or in exile were appointed to the most important positions in public life. **Erich Honecker, First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, spent ten years in prison under the Nazi regime and Horst Sindermann, Chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers, was imprisoned for 11 years.** Other party and government leaders of the GDR also languished in jails and concentration camps for many years. No minister in the GDR's Government and no officer in the National People's Army was a member of the NSDAP or an officer of the Nazi **Wehrmacht.**

Never again fascism and war

As outlined in the KPD's programme of 11 June 1945, the German communists and their allies directed all their efforts at preventing fascism and war from springing up once again from German soil. The best way to guarantee this was to destroy their social roots, to initiate measures for a radical departure from the old Prussian-militarist setup. A major task was to strip the **Junkers** and the coal and steel barons of their power because these had not only unleashed World War II in league with the Nazis, but had also been largely responsible for World War I. People of their stamp were Germany's and the world's undoing. Any compromise or understanding with them was out of the question.

It was a matter of crucial importance, in embarking on the new road, to overcome once and for all the split in the working class which Nazism had exploited to seize power. In April 1946 the KPD and the SPD, led by the communist Wilhelm Pieck and the social democrat Otto Grotewohl respectively, merged in the east of Germany to form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). The SED embodies the best traditions

of the revolutionary struggles of the German Left. It is the main force in the National Front, an antifascist alliance, which also includes four other political parties and various mass organizations as it did 25 years ago when it was founded.

Led by the SED and acting together with its allies the working class of the GDR has gone through a period of complicated class struggle. Having completed the antifascist and democratic revolution it went on to lay the foundations of socialism and is now building an advanced socialist society. The road to a better future was extremely difficult. The vast majority of the people had been docile followers of the Nazis, and the war had left havoc and devastation in its wake everywhere. The problems were compounded by the fact that the imperialists imposed a relentless blockade on the country using all the means at their disposal (subversion, sabotage and espionage) to prevent reconstruction in the east of Germany at all costs. But the communists, while displaying a large measure of flexibility and mobility, never made the slightest ideological concessions to fascist, nationalist or other reactionary views however delicate the situation might be.

All possibilities were exploited in the GDR

It goes without saying that the establishment of a new German state was not only a matter of ideological work. Conditions enabling the people to exercise power for the first time in their history had to be created step by step. A land reform was introduced, under which the land of the **Junkers** was divided and parcelled out among the ordinary peasants. This was followed by a school reform which flung the doors of schools and colleges wide open to all children of the people and by the transfer of large enterprises into

public ownership. In what was a very complicated process the people, young and old, learned to manage production, strengthen their own state and gradually cleared away the rubble left behind by the Nazi regime. This was a brilliant confirmation of the words of Ernst Thälmann, the unforgettable working-class leader, who had said that no capitalist state could do without workers whereas a socialist state had no need of big business because it could settle its affairs much better without it.

One thing will never be forgotten in the GDR: Without the fraternal and disinterested aid which the Soviet Union, itself a war-devastated country, extended to us from the very first moment, without the vast knowledge and rich experience passed on by many Soviet people, without support from other fraternal socialist states it would have been impossible to cope successfully with the gigantic task of reconstructing the country. Day-to-day cooperation in building a socialist state that had no longer anything in common with the sinister traditions of a fascist past, has given rise to an indestructible alliance that now firmly links the Soviet Union and the GDR in all spheres of life. These close ties have been enshrined in the Constitution of the GDR:

"The German Democratic Republic is for ever and irrevocably allied with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The close and fraternal alliance with it guarantees the people of the German Democratic Republic continued progress along the road of socialism and peace."

Thirty years after the liberation of the German people from Nazi rule the communists of the GDR can proudly state that they have honourably fulfilled their historic mission of uprooting war and fascism as they had promised in 1945. The opportunity to build a new Germany has been fully made use of. The GDR is now a respected member of the world community.

International solidarity with all those who are oppressed and held in servitude is a cause especially dear to the hearts of people in the GDR. In recent years, the GDR's trade union confederation alone has made available to the GDR Solidarity Committee members' donations totalling some 375 million marks. By the time the Paris Agreement was signed in January 1973 the material aid granted by the GDR to Vietnam had attained approximately 1,500 million marks. At present, the main emphasis is on solidarity with the victims of fascist rule in Chile. Well over 1,000 Chilean exiles have found a temporary second home in the GDR.

The GDR considers it a special obligation to honour the memory of those who laid down their lives in the struggle against fascism. A survey of the memorials to the fight against fascism and war is contained in a 533-page book published in Berlin in early 1974. In the Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg, 38 streets have been named after antifascists of various political beliefs. Every year on the second Sunday in September Berliners commemorate the victims of fascism at a rally attended by representatives of many European countries. Generous support is given to citizens who sacrificed their health in the struggle against fascism and to the families of murdered resistance fighters.

Everything for the welfare of man

Although ranking only 96th and 36th in the world, respectively, with an area of 41,802 square miles and a population of 17 million the GDR has won a place among the leading industrial nations thanks to an increasingly effective use of the advantages inherent in the socialist system and to the application and industry of its working people. Since 1949, the founding year of the republic, national income has gone up from 22,000 million marks to 135,000 million.

Once it had gained acceptance as a fully-fledged member of the world community the GDR was able to concentrate still more on the solution of its internal problems, notably the country's primary task, which the First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, Erich Honecker, defined as follows at the 8th Congress of his party in June 1971:

> **"The primary task of the Five-Year Plan is to secure a further increase in the people's living and cultural standards on the basis of a rapid pace of development of socialist production, increased efficiency, scientific and technological advance and growing labour productivity."**

Two examples will show that this task has been tackled successfully. By the end of 1975 the supply of goods will have risen to the equivalent of 83,500 million marks as compared with 67,000 million in 1971, prices having remained stable all the time. (The inflation afflicting western countries is known here only from hearsay.) **For a family of four this represents 4,000 marks in real income, roughly the equivalent of 4 1/2 months' earnings.**

An additional 8,000 million marks from the national budget have been earmarked for a generous social welfare programme which provides, among other things, for interest-free loans to newly weds, increased maternity grants and allowances for large families, higher pensions and special benefits for the less-well-off. This represents another 500 marks added to an average person's income.

The atmosphere in which the working people are directing all their energies towards the universal strengthening of their socialist country is one of security, freedom, human dignity and socialist democracy. The citizens of the GDR appreciate this all the more at a time when the general crisis in the capitalist countries is going from bad to worse. The GDR con-

tinues to forge ahead as a peace-loving socialist state, as an inseparable part of a family of free nations jointly building socialism and communism.

The living example of socialism

Erich Honecker, First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, said in an important speech given at a festive function to mark the 25th anniversary of the GDR in 1974: "It was our unforgotten Comrade Wilhelm Pieck who, after having been elected the first President of the German Democratic Republic, called on the people in his inaugural speech to meet the challenge of history so as to stand up to the verdict of future generations. This is the way we have acted throughout these 25 years. And we shall continue to make every effort to fulfil our duty honourably before our people and the world revolutionary movement."

Taking the floor on the same occasion, CPSU General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev pointed out: **"The birth of the first workers' and farmers' state in the native country of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels is a milestone in the development of world socialism along the path which the great victory in the October Revolution opened up for mankind. The experience accumulated during socialist construction in an advanced industrial country has greatly enriched Marxist-Leninist thought and is very helpful to the struggle of our class brothers in the capitalist countries."**

This expression of high esteem has mobilized working people in the GDR into new actions for peace, democracy and socialism. In a close alliance with the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community they are playing their part in showing by a living example that the socialist system needs and strengthens peace, that it guarantees free development and social security for all.

V. Reaction—hampered but dangerous

So far fascism has not recovered from the shattering defeat it suffered in World War II despite strenuous efforts to regain its influence. The atrocities of the fascists are too fresh in the minds of the people to permit fascist ideology to win any substantial **popular** support of the kind it enjoyed in Germany and in other countries during the 30's and 40's. Since the tottering Caetano regime was overthrown in Portugal, one of the oldest fascist-ruled countries, Spain has remained the only European country with a fascist regime. In countries where fascist dictatorships were established in recent years these have collapsed (as in Greece) or have been isolated and discredited within and without (as in Chile) to such an extent that they cannot hope to have any mass appeal.

The call for a "strong man"

Because fascism was discredited as an ideology and form of government the ruling circles in the capitalist countries generally preferred, after the end of World War II, to maintain their system by the traditional mechanism of government, usually described as western-style democracy. But as the crisis in the capitalist countries grinds on, increased efforts are being made there to mobilize extreme right-wing forces and elements with profascist tendencies. They are all call-

ing for a "strong man" to restore "law and order". In so doing the fascists not only skilfully exploit the difficulties besetting the masses as a result of the deepening general crisis of capitalism but try to add to the chaos. Over the past few years Italy has been the scene of more than 2,000 fascist bomb attempts and attempted assassinations in which over 50 people were killed. That the fascists are especially active in Italy is no accident. The Italian Communist Party is, in terms of membership, the strongest political party in Western Europe. Its influence is growing continuously whereas big business in Italy has long been in the throes of a profound political and economic crisis.

Fascists everywhere are copying Hitler in that they rant and make false promises to canvass support. Fascist demagogues, who have at all times been eager to whip up nationalist feeling, also take advantage of the increase in nationalism now discernible in various western countries, a phenomenon largely due to the migration of labour.

Developments during the last fifty years have shown that fascism follows the same fluctuating pattern as capitalism in general. Whenever the capitalist system is violently shaken, an upsurge in fascist activities is likely to result.

Fascism, like war, is not an act of fate. It is not an inescapable scourge of mankind, an act of divine wrath. It can be successfully countered, especially as it has by no means gained in strength since the 30's and 40's and has been crushed once before under much more difficult conditions.

No change in the nature of fascism

Current trends in the development of fascism confirm that the definition given by the VIIth World Congress of the Communist International has fully retained its

validity (cf. Chapter II). Just as in the years between the world wars fascism is today an instrument wielded by the most aggressive quarters of big business to halt social progress and check the process of détente.

If the term 'neo-fascism' is now widely used, the prefix 'neo' should be applied only to a certain section of the fascist leaders and to some specific manifestations of fascism. **The fact remains that the essence, function and task of fascism has not changed in any way.**

In his play **Arturo Ui** Bertolt Brecht had warned against a resurgence of fascism after World War II because the roots of this totalitarian system had not yet been destroyed. In our day the gravest threat is posed by the imperialist monopolies and corporations that profit most from the arms race and have entered an unholy alliance with reactionary NATO brass hats known as the military-industrial complex. The latter was and remains the main beneficiary of the 1,700 billion dollars which NATO has wasted on arms over the last 25 years. This sum would have been sufficient to provide each family in the world with a comfortable modern flat at low rent. The military-industrial complex is desperately clinging to its source of maximum profit. It is prepared to go to any length to save it, including fascism.

There is no denying that these most aggressive quarters of imperialism represent a factor that must be taken seriously. Nothing would be more disastrous than to underestimate the threat they pose to world peace and international détente. The socialist countries, the communist and workers' parties, and all progressive forces have stressed over and over again **that détente does not take place automatically.** Peaceful coexistence between states with differing social systems as a basic principle of safeguarding peace and security can be enforced only in a bitter and persistent struggle against the most reactionary ele-

ments of imperialism, but this at a time **when these have already lost a lot of ground.** This permits the progressive forces to envisage further struggles with optimism.

Encouraging results

In the campaign for peace and security, against reaction and war a special responsibility rests upon the nations of Europe because it is on their continent that two world wars have originated in this century. A relatively large number of states is concentrated there on a relatively small area. The two opposing military alliances are facing each other along a frontier more than 600 miles in length. Europe remains the most densely populated continent, producing more than half of the world's industrial output. Consequently, stable security and cooperation there would promote détente not only in Europe but in the world at large to the point where this process would become irreversible.

As outlined in Chapter III, the Soviet Union had campaigned for peace in Europe long before the outbreak of World War II. The destruction of fascism in the course of the war removed a major obstacle in the way of European security and cooperation. The political balance of forces has since undergone further far-reaching changes in Europe and elsewhere **so that it is now a realistic aim to banish war from the life of mankind and to erect a durable edifice for peaceful cooperation.**

The struggles of the past against fascism and war and the present campaign for peace and security cannot be separated from each other. Now as before the overriding objective is to make man's dream of a lasting peace come true and increasingly to curb all those who oppose the efforts made in this direction.

As we enter the last quarter of the century we can

ngreso Mundial de las Fuerzas Pacificas por la seguridad internacional y el desarme. la
ependencia nacional.la cooperacion y la paz.

eltkongress der Friedenskräfte für internationale Sicherheit und Abrüstung. für nationale
abhangigkeit. Zusammenarbeit und Frieden.

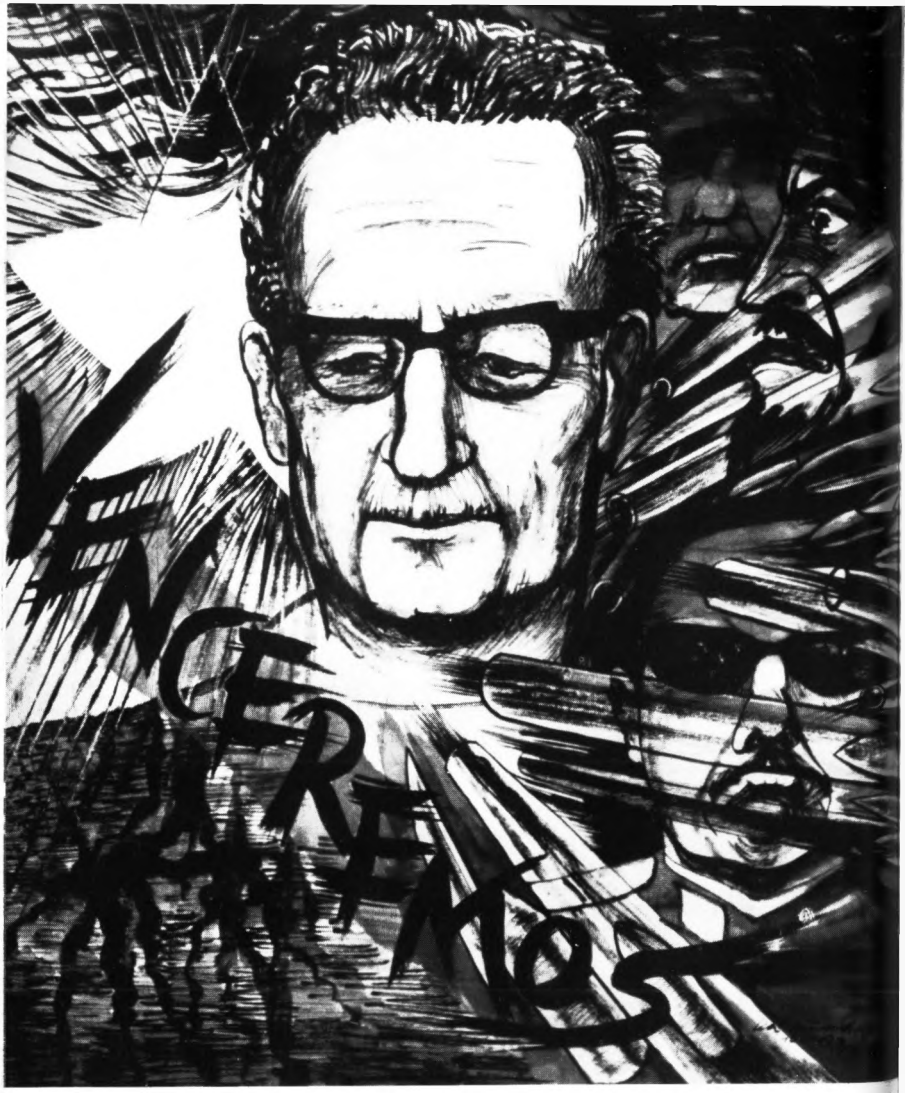
المؤتمر العالمي للقوى المحبة للسلام من اجل الامن الدولي ونزع السلاح ,الاستقلال الوطني
,التعاون ,السلام.

The World Congress of Peace Forces held in Moscow in 1973 brought together 3,200 people from 143 countries. Pictured at centre is Romesh Chandra, Secretary-General of the World Peace Council.

Erich Honecker, First Secretary of the SED Central Committee (right), receiving Dr Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations, during the latter's several-days visit to the GDR in early February 1975. GDR leaders and the UN Secretary-General held friendly talks on a wide range of issues of mutual interest.

The example of Chile shows that the danger of a return to fascism and terror has not yet been overcome forever. (above). The successes achieved by Chile's working people along the road to genuine democracy and social progress led to a counter-revolutionary coup. In South Africa the racist regime tries to drown the liberation movement in blood.

In Portugal, the fascist Caetano regime was overthrown by the joint action of the democratic forces. The key problem now is to repudiate the onslaughts of reaction in the same manner (above). Wherever the liberation forces set foot in South Vietnam they are acclaimed with loud cheers and relief.



Solidarity is extended to all people fighting against fascism and war to win their freedom. Workers, young people, women and artists in the GDR have produced thousandfold proof of such an attitude. Prof. Lea Grundig exhibited her print entitled "Dr Allende" at the 9th Fine Arts Exhibition in the county of Dresden in 1974.

note that these efforts, which will possibly determine the fate of many generations to come, have produced very encouraging results, especially over the last few years. We are witnessing the progressive implementation of the **peace programme** adopted by the XXIVth Congress of the CPSU in 1971 on the suggestion of Leonid I. Brezhnev. It has become the joint programme of action of all those committed to peace and the relaxation of tensions. The main results achieved so far are the following:

- The hotbed of war in South East Asia has been extinguished.
- First moves have been made towards a political settlement in the Middle East.
- New acts of aggression as they were committed against the people of Indochina and against Arab countries have been prevented.
- In Europe, a number of treaties have been concluded by which the post-war situation in Europe was formally recognized. This marked a turn towards détente and peace on the continent.
- The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is nearing its successful conclusion.
- First steps have been taken to check the arms race, notably by treaties of fundamental importance concluded between the USA and the USSR.
- The general climate for measures to limit armaments and ultimately bring about disarmament has been further improved by various agreements which encourage mutual trust.
- The imperialist colonial system has almost dwindled into non-existence.
- Fresh blows have been dealt to the policy of racism and **apartheid.**
- Good progress has been achieved in organizing universally advantageous cooperation to solve problems in a wide range of fields such as the protection

of the human environment, the exploitation of energy and other natural resources, the development of trade, transport and communications, the prevention and eradication of the most dangerous and most widespread diseases, the exploration and use of outer space and the world ocean. (Our brochure entitled "We want to live in peace—but how?" from the "First-hand information" series discusses these problems in greater detail.)

How does the GDR promote the process of détente?

The GDR has spared no effort to make a contribution of its own to the implementation of the peace programme. Wherever it is in a position to do so it works for the consolidation of peace, for the continuation of the process of détente, for the promotion of social progress. In an interview granted during a visit to the GDR UN Secretary-General Dr. Kurt Waldheim said about the activities of our country in the United Nations: "The cooperation of your country, the GDR, is a very active one. The delegation joined in the work of the world organization relatively soon after its admission and is now making a very useful contribution to United Nations efforts to bring about peace and solve a variety of problems. It has repeatedly been the author of compromise formulas. This is exceedingly important and useful work. I would also like to mention that the GDR invited the United Nations special committee on apartheid last year to hold a meeting on its territory and that it is also very active in the field of disarmament. The GDR has been elected a member of the UN disarmament committee in Geneva, in which capacity it has an opportunity to play an even more active part in the endeavours of the United Nations to solve the disarmament issue."

As part of the peace offensive launched by the

socialist community the GDR has, in recent years, made special efforts to end tensions over West Berlin and to normalize relations with the Federal Republic on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence. At the 13th session of the SED Central Committee, its First Secretary, Erich Honecker, outlined the tasks and initiatives of the GDR in the campaign for peace as follows:

"Now and in future everyone can take for granted that the existence of the German Democratic Republic, which thrives and gathers strength as a member of the socialist community, is a factor stabilizing peace, security and cooperation in Europe. This salutary effect is also felt outside Europe. As the many party and government delegations visiting our country have underlined on frequent occasions it is of great importance to progressive movements throughout the world that our socialist state on German soil has consolidated its positions, that it fulfils its duties in its sector of the international class struggle and helps to enhance the appeal of living socialism."

The encouraging development of the international situation, the constantly changing balance of forces, the mounting influence of living socialism, especially the power of the Soviet Union, and the need for imperialism to adapt increasingly to international changes **open up the realistic prospect of removing the danger of fascism once and for all and banishing it from the face of the earth.**

Vigilance is called for

The remaining fascist-ruled countries are trying hard, though unsuccessfully, to rid themselves of the opprobrium attached to fascism. They are anxious to create the impression of "liberalization", for example by allowing some sham opposition in Parliament. At

times, they scale down their terrorist measures for a limited period. Even the blood-stained Pinochet clique in Chile is at pains to clear itself of its bad reputation as a fascist dictatorship. The collapse of the fascist regimes in Portugal and Greece has produced fresh proof that the position of fascism is anything but secure.

Even so, all antifascists are called upon to exercise the utmost vigilance. In judging the fascist menace one should not only consider the fact that the fascist states are now isolated internationally and that there are no signs of a take-over by an overtly fascist party in any West European country. The danger of a fascist revival chiefly emanates from parties or political groupings that may be described as **semi-fascist.** In Western Europe these tend to play according to the "rules of the democratic game" but if circumstances permit it they may soon embark on a course leading to full-scale fascism.

The West German press has repeatedly described Franz-Josef Strauss's Christian Social Party in Bavaria, which polled almost two-thirds of the votes in last year's state elections, as a party with fascist leanings. It is worth mentioning in this context that **the military-industrial complex of the Federal Republic is concentrated in Bavaria.**

Peaceful coexistence—past and present

If peace, which has now reigned in Europe for 30 years and is being put on a lasting basis in ever larger parts of the world, is to be preserved and strengthened still further, this requires positive action. All those who have the cause of peace at heart should help carry out the peace programme of the XXIVth CPSU Congress to the letter. **This is a great programme for a world of peace, security and détente.**

Great successes have been achieved in recent years in the campaign for peace and the reduction of tensions thanks to the efforts made by the socialist community, by various political parties and public organizations, by millions of organized or, as yet, unorganized peace fighters as well as by realistically minded political leaders in western countries. These successes provide a sound basis for making what has already been achieved irreversible, for **placing peace on an increasingly secure basis through peaceful coexistence** in relations between states with differing systems.

The wartime coalition against Hitler's Germany was the first major test of the principle of peaceful coexistence which Lenin had put forward. It showed that peaceful coexistence is more than a situation in which countries live alongside each other, **that the consistent implementation of this principle makes it possible to avert disaster.** As things stand today, the principle of peaceful coexistence is being successfully developed on a higher level in the relations which the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the other fraternal socialist countries maintain with the United States, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and other capitalist countries, in the normalization of the relationship between the GDR and the Federal Republic, in the activities of the United Nations and in many other spheres. Without seeking to belittle what has been achieved it must be stressed that if all sides involved display good will much more striking results can be attained.

The Allied coalition broke up very soon after the end of World War II. Fearful of the tremendous prestige which the USSR and the communists had won in the battle to rid mankind of the scourge of fascism, leading circles in the imperialist countries embarked on what became known as the cold war, fomenting anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism once again. It was clear

from the beginning that the mass of the people would not gain anything from the cold war but in the long run even its intitiators had to recognize that it was no more than another abortive attempt to contain the international influence of the world communist movement and of the socialist states. The ideas carried into the world arena by the socialist community and its positive policies proved stronger. While the trend towards peaceful coexistence and détente is now apparently predominant in international relations the experience gathered since the end of World War II shows that sudden changes in world politics are still possible. Hence there are no guarantees that the now prevailing trend will not be hindered or even offset by trends running in the opposite direction. Given the current state of the international balance of forces the aggressive forces would naturally find it extremely difficult to push things as far as that but such a development cannot yet be completely ruled out.

Call for unity and action

The main weapon in the struggle against war and reaction, against all attempts to put the clock back in world affairs, in the fight against fascist and semi-fascist forces and the military-industrial complex behind them is the same that the communists described as essential for removing the danger in the inter-war years: **the union of all antifascist and democratic forces in a broad movement for peace, security and progress.**

A wholesome climate of international détente is an effective weapon against reaction and fascism, which thrive best in an atmosphere of national hatred and war hysteria. The socialist states will make special efforts to develop this climate as the 30th anniversary of the liberation from fascism draws nearer. They will do

all in their power to strengthen international détente, mutually beneficial cooperation between states with differing social systems and the union of all progressive, peace-loving forces in the struggle against imperialist aggression and reaction, for a lasting peace and international security.

It will be a major task in the period lying ahead to complement political détente by effective moves towards military détente. Far-reaching steps must be taken at last to end the arms race and bring about disarmament. The Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community have come up with a wealth of constructive ideas and submitted workable proposals at the United Nations, in other bodies and during bilateral and multilateral talks and negotiations. The agreements reached between the USSR and the USA, some of them being of great importance, represent first successes in dealing with this complex issue.

In view of the bitter resistance of the military-industrial complex this crucial problem cannot, in the western countries, be left exclusively to statesmen and diplomats. It is necessary for the general public to bring its influence to bear by concerted actions designed to produce tangible results that would help improve the international situation still further and facilitate the solution of a variety of problems. A major theme for such actions could be the Soviet proposal that the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States), should cut back their military spending by 10 per cent and make available part of the funds saved to developing nations, other countries being invited to follow suit.

Much has been achieved and we are confident that there will be no return to fascism and war. The united strength of people who have learned their lesson from the history of the battle against war and fascism is a powerful safeguard against a new world war. It is

really worth while to make a common and persistent effort to attain this lofty aim.

The countries of the socialist community, including the German Democratic Republic, will continue to press on with their policy of peace, to strengthen the links between them and to forge ahead along the road of socialist and communist construction. In so doing they will, now as before, make the greatest possible contribution to the struggle against fascists, reactionaries and warmongers of whatever hue, to the ultimate triumph of the traditional battle-cry of all antifascists—

Venceremos! No pasaran!

Documentation

The struggle against fascism and war— past and present

Peace, the burning question of the day

The question of peace is a burning question, the vital question of the day. Much has been said and written on the subject, and all of you, no doubt, have discussed it quite a lot. Permit me, therefore, to proceed to read a declaration which the government you elect should publish.

Decree on Peace

The workers' and peasants' government, created by the Revolution of October 24–25 and basing itself on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace... Our appeal must be addressed both to the governments and to the peoples. We cannot ignore the governments, for that would delay the possibility of concluding peace, and the people's government dare not do that; but we have no right not to appeal to the peoples at the same time. Everywhere there are differences between the governments and the peoples, and we must therefore help the peoples to intervene in questions of war and peace.

V. I. Lenin: From the Report on Peace given on 26 October (8 November) 1917 at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets

From the parliamentary system to the fascist method

To ensure greater stability and strength of its rule, the bourgeoisie is increasingly compelled to switch from the parliamentary system over to the fascist method which is independent of relations and combinations between the parties.

The primary task of fascism is the destruction of the revolutionary vanguard of the working class, i.e. the communist sections of

the proletariat and their leaders. Social demagogy and corruption interlaced with active White terrorism as well as the most extreme form of imperialist aggressiveness in foreign policy are characteristic traits of fascism.

From the minutes of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, Moscow, 17 July to 1 September 1928

The fascists (National Socialists) maintain that their movement is directed against imperialism. But in reality they conclude agreements with the imperialists (Great Britain, Italy). They oppose the liberation struggle of colonial peoples (India, China, Indochina), demand colonies for Germany and advocate new wars, especially armed intervention against the Soviet Union . . .

"On the national and social liberation of the German people", programme statement by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany, 24 August 1930

A united front is the need of the hour

Are we honest about an antifascist united front? Day after day the brown pest, the Nazis, murder our comrades, bring down our best fighters, carry out provocative attacks on our party offices . . . Hitler's pack of officers and princes have stated that they will exterminate the Communist movement, hanging, beheading and breaking many millions of revolutionary men and women. And in view of this fact, of the looming threat that Germany will be turned into a country of gallows and executions, how could we communists not be honest about the antifascist, proletarian united front?

Ernst Thälmann replying to questions posed by officials of the Social Democratic Party and the Reichsbanner, 8 July 1932

The need of the hour is to form the united front of all working people in order to repulse fascism, to preserve the strength and might of the organizations of those enslaved and oppressed, yes even their very lives. All restrictive and divisive attitudes regarding politics, trade unions, religion and world outlook must give way before this imperative historical necessity.

Inaugural speech as President by Seniority held by Clara Zetkin before the German Reichstag, 30 August 1932

Last-minute offer

Europe is threatened with war. Hitler will never fall by himself! If the working class keeps "law and order", if it accepts wage robbery, terrorism and war propaganda without resistance, then

Hitler will not be ousted, but a disaster affecting all workers, peasants and other working people will come upon Germany, a disaster bound to end in an imperialist slaughter, in a war against Soviet Russia ... Therefore it is imperative now to eliminate everything that hinders the workers in initiating the class struggle to overthrow the fascist dictatorship ... We extend to you our hand in friendship, Comrades, take it!

From the open letter addressed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany, in June 1933, to all Social Democratic workers in Germany

Hitler spells disaster

Hitler speaks about equal rights for Germany, but in reality he is organizing war to oppress other nations. The warmongers of 1914, who bear the guilt for Germany's defeat in 1918, have again engineered events ... Hitler's policy of war is leading the German people into disaster ...

The undersigned, members of all the German workers' parties and organizations, which are waging a heroic struggle against Hitler's regime in Germany, together with representatives of the professional groups, declare: In the face of the mounting danger of war and a threatening catastrophe, unity is more necessary than ever.

From the appeal launched by 118 representatives of political parties and professional groups, Paris, 2 February 1936

Communists and Catholics share the same interests in mobilizing all forces against their common enemy, barbaric Hitlerite fascism, and in subordinating everything else to this single task. Furthermore, they have the same interest in ensuring, after Hitler's overthrow, a free decision of the German people on their future government, and in building a democratic republic ...

From the open letter addressed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany to all Catholics, July 1936

Heinrich Mann: Popular front against Hitler's war policy

Hitler is driving Germany into a disastrous war ... That is why the foremost task of a German popular front can only be to fight against Hitler's war policy, the unbearable arms burden and military coercive measures in order to maintain peace. This struggle for peace, which would save our youth and that of other nations from destruction on the battle field, is in the real national interests of the German people ...

Every delay in the outbreak of a war by strengthening the international forces of peace, every military success of the Spanish people's army against the invasion troops, every kind of resistance by the masses in Germany creates more favourable conditions for the victory over Hitler, the enemy of the people.

A democratic people's republic is the great objective of the struggle uniting all friends of peace and freedom in Germany. The German people themselves will freely decide on their fate in this democratic people's republic. They will eradicate fascism.

Speech at the meeting of the committee charged with preparing the German popular front. The meeting took place on 10 and 11 April 1937

The struggle against fascism—a concern of the entire nation

The liberation struggle of the German people to overthrow Hitler's dictatorship and to establish a democratic Germany is inseparably linked with the struggle of the nations subjugated and threatened by Hitler and the war Axis. Only such a policy is in Germany's national interest and guarantees that the German people will not find enemies, but allies in these nations... To unite the people for this purpose—that is the goal of a German popular front.

From the resolution of the conference held by the Communist Party of Germany in Berne, 30 January to 1 February 1939

They need fascism

The imperialist circles seek to shift the **entire** burden of the crisis onto the shoulders of the working people. **They need fascism for this.** They want to solve the problem of markets by enslaving weak nations, heightening colonial oppression and redividing the world through war. **They need fascism for this.** They seek to **prevent** the advance of the forces of revolution by crushing the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants and by a military attack on the Soviet Union, the bastion of the world proletariat. **They need fascism for this...**

German fascism plays the role of a **spearhead of international counter-revolution, of the principal instigator of imperialist war, of the initiator of a crusade against the Soviet Union which is the great fatherland of working people all over the world...**

Fascism in a country's foreign policy—that is the most brutal form of chauvinism breeding a brutish hatred against other peoples.

Georgi Dimitrov, report given at the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, Moscow, 1935

Freedom for all peoples

We do not and cannot have any war aims such as the aim of imposing our will and our regime on the Slavonic and other subjugated European peoples who expect help from us. Our aim is to aid these peoples in their liberation struggle against Hitlerite tyranny and then leave it to them to organize their own country as they wish . . .

Y. V. Stalin, On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union

- The Soviet Army destroyed, crushed or captured 607 German divisions, of which 300 were outside Soviet territory. This amounted to 82 per cent of human losses suffered by the Nazis.
- 40,000 Soviet citizens fought in partisan units of other countries where they had been driven by war events: 18,000 in Poland, 5,000 in Italy, 3,000 in Czechoslovakia, 3,000 in France, and 3,000 in Yugoslavia.
- The Soviet armed forces liberated all or part of the territory of ten European countries with a total area of about one million square kilometres and a population of 113 million, and part of the territory of two Asian countries with a total area of over 1.5 million square kilometres and a population of 70 million.
- The figures below indicate the number of Soviet soldiers who died liberating European nations:

Poland	600,000	Hungary	14,000
Rumania	69,000	Austria	26,000
Yugoslavia	8,000	Czechoslovakia	140,000
Norway	16,000	German territory (16 April to 8 May 1945)	102,000

The Soviet Union already gave large-scale military and material support to these countries during the war. Polish, Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Yugoslav and French military units were set up on the territory of the Soviet Union and with its decisive help. They received all necessary weapons, communication devices, means of transport, ammunition, fuel and equipment from the Soviet Union . . .

Quoted from the foreword of "The Soviet armed forces' crusade for liberation in the Second World War" by A. A. Grechko (during the war Commander of the First Guards Army), Moscow, 1971

Free Germany National Committee—a broad front of German antifascists

The National Committee is made up of workers and writers, soldiers and officers, trade unionists and politicians, people of all political and ideological trends who just a year ago would not have thought such a union possible . . .

The facts show that the war is lost. Germany cannot but drag it out at the cost of immeasurable sacrifice and privation. The continuation of the hopeless war would mean the end of the German nation.

From the appeal of 12/13 July 1943 launched by the Free Germany National Committee upon its founding

Other organizations of Germans opposing Hitler directed by the Free Germany National Committee were formed in Switzerland, Great Britain, France, Latin America, Sweden, Greece and the USA in 1943 and 1944.

Thomas Mann: The world will experience an unprecedented catastrophe

The Nazis know they are doomed. Their megalomaniac satanism would have it that nothing and nobody should suffer a catastrophe as great as theirs. It is to be a destruction, an apocalypse of unmatched dimensions, and they want to drag down with them to a bloody and flaming hell any and everything they can . . .

From his radio speech on 29 September 1943

Common aim of the Allies

It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world. We are determined . . . (to) take in harmony such other measures in Germany as may be necessary to the future peace and safety of the world.

It is not our purpose to destroy the people of Germany, but only when Nazism and militarism have been extirpated will there be hope for decent life for Germans and a place for them in the community of nations.

From the communiqué signed by the Heads of Government of Great Britain, the USSR and the USA at the Crimea Conference, 4 to 11 February 1945

Bertolt Brecht: The responsibility of the people

People's memories for past sufferings are surprisingly bad. Their ability to imagine future sufferings seems to be even worse. The descriptions of atomic horrors apparently hardly frightened New Yorkers at all. The people of Hamburg are still surrounded by ruins and yet they hesitate to raise their hands in protest against a new war. The terrible events which shook the world in the forties seem to be forgotten. There is a saying that yesterday's rain doesn't make us wet.

This numbness is what we have to fight. Its extreme form is death. Indeed, too many people appear to be dead. They are like people who have already lived through what still lies ahead of them because they do nothing to stop it.

Nonetheless, nothing can convince me that the defence of reason against its enemies is hopeless. Let us repeat once more what has been repeated thousands of times so that it will not have been repeated one time too few. Let us sound the warning once more even though we are sick and tired of sounding it. People are now threatened with wars which make all past wars seem bungling attempts and these wars will come if those who are openly preparing for them are not crushed.

At the Peace Congress in Vienna, November 1952

Completely eradicated

...I take the liberty of drawing your attention to the fact that as early as 17 March 1969 the German Democratic Republic informed the Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, of its readiness to accede to the convention on the non-applicability of statutory limitations to war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the German Democratic Republic steps have been taken to prevent Nazism and racism from ever rising again...

Cable sent by the GDR Minister of Foreign Affairs to the President of the 25th session of the UN General Assembly in 1970, UN document A/C 3/623

Punishment of war criminals and Nazi activists in the GDR

Year	Capital punishment	Life imprisonment	Other terms of imprisonment: over 10 years	3 to 10 years	less than 3 years	Total
1945	2	1	–	2	1	6
1946	8	2	22	35	56	123
1947	8	6	22	130	578	744
1948	10	12	62	709	3,756	4,559
1949	13	11	70	404	2,138	2,633
1950	49	160	2,914	384	585	4,092
1951	7	9	30	112	173	331
1952	3	6	17	53	61	140
1953	1	7	18	44	15	85
1954	1	2	7	20	5	35
1955	4	4	5	8	2	23
1956–1970	15	22	7	21	–	65
	121	242	3,174	1,919	7,370	12,826

A principle laid down in the Constitution

Article 6 of the Constitution of the GDR reads:
(1) The German Democratic Republic faithful to the interests of the people and its international obligations, has eradicated German militarism and Nazism on its territory, and pursues a foreign policy serving socialism and peace, international friendship and security.
(2) The German Democratic Republic is for ever and irrevocably allied with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The close and fraternal alliance with it guarantees the people of the German Democratic Republic continued progress along the road of socialism and peace.

The German Democratic Republic is an inseparable part of the community of socialist states. Faithful to the principles of socialist internationalism it contributes to its reinforcement, cultivates and develops friendship, universal cooperation and mutual assistance with all states of the socialist community.
(3) The German Democratic Republic supports the states and peoples fighting against imperialism and its colonial regime, for national freedom and independence in their struggle for social progress. The German Democratic Republic advocates the im-

plementation of the principles of peaceful coexistence between states with differing social systems and, on the basis of equal rights and mutual respect, promotes cooperation with all states.
(4) The German Democratic Republic works for security and cooperation in Europe, for a stable structure of peace in the world and for general disarmament.
(5) Militarist and revanchist propaganda in all forms, warmongering and the manifestation of hatred against creeds, races and nations are punished as crimes.

To become aware of the danger and combat it

Fascism is intensifying its activity at a time when the crisis of imperialism is growing sharper, when reaction is increasingly inclined to use brutal methods to crush the democratic and revolutionary forces... Neo-fascist activity links up with that of imperialist intelligence agencies, which engineer reactionary coups... The struggle against the fascist regimes is an essential part of action against imperialism, for democratic freedoms.

International Conference of 75 Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow 1969

The enemies of peace and international détente, the forces of imperialism and reaction seek to stop the process of détente wherever they can. They are trying in vain to deprive the peoples of their rights and achievements. Fascism and neo-fascism are a danger for the peace and freedom of the peoples. The present situation calls for the greatest vigilance on the part of the peace forces.

Declaration to mark the 25th anniversary of the world peace movement, Paris, 1974

For the well-being of the working masses

For the Soviet people the Great Patriotic War was not only a struggle for our country's freedom and independence. It was also a battle to save world civilization, a battle for a just peace in the future. Throughout the post-war period, the Soviet Union has tirelessly worked for lasting peace and the security of nations.

The consistently peaceable policy of the CPSU and the Soviet State is epitomized at the present stage by the Peace Programme of the 24th Congress of our Communist Party... And we have been working and will continue to work ceaselessly for these noble goals, for the benefit of all working people.

Speech by L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, at the World Congress of Peace Forces, Moscow, October 1973

There are still areas of the world where peace is endangered.

The Middle East still is a dangerous spot because Israel refuses, and is still able to do so due to the aid it receives, to withdraw from the regions occupied in 1967 and to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people. We have witnessed belligerent clashes in Cyprus this year. On the other hand, the plot against Cyprus failed and led to the removal of the fascist regime in Greece. Fascism in Portugal was overthrown after having ruled the country for decades, an event which was equally a success of the liberation movements in the former Portuguese colonies. All this has advanced the cause of peace and democracy.

Erich Honecker, First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, report of the Politbureau to the 13th session of the SED Central Committee, 12 to 14 December 1974

The GDR learnt the lessons of history

After liberation from fascism by the Soviet Army, the German people were faced not simply with the chance, but with the obligation to make a new start. The crucial question was whether the lessons would be learnt from history, in particular from the two world wars unleashed by German imperialism and militarism. The Communists, progressive Social Democrats and other upright antifascists united on the basis of the antifascist and democratic concept first outlined by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany in its manifesto of 11 June 1945. This concept was in accordance with the principles of the Potsdam Agreement and the Charter of the United Nation. And they learnt the lessons that history had taught them.

The lesson was

to extirpate the political and economic roots of fascism and militarism and to create an antifascist, peace-loving and democratic German state which would never again threaten its neighbours.

The lesson was

to pave the way, through an anti-imperialist and democratic change-over, for a new social system without exploitation and oppression, without crises, poverty and misery—the way to socialism. It was necessary to clear away not simply the material rubble, but also the moral rubble left behind by fascism. The need of the hour was a basic renewal of the consciousness and culture of our people.

The lesson was

to shape our people's history in friendship and an alliance with the Soviet Union, to participate in the historical progress embodied by the Soviet Union and world socialism, and never again to permit anti-communism and enmity towards the Soviet Union.

The lesson was

to actively participate in the establishment of a European system of peace, which would bring peace to the peoples of our continent for many generations, and permit goodneighbourly cooperation for mutual benefit.

These historical lessons on which the antifascist forces based their joint action were in accord with the laws governing the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism on a world scale. They were brought to fruition in the GDR thanks to the achievements of the working class, the class of cooperative farmers, the socialist intelligentsia and all other working people under the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. The people of the GDR were integrated in the world revolutionary process. All this took place in accordance with the laws of history. However, this did not happen all by itself. Like all laws of the historical process, it had to be actively carried out by the masses in hard class struggles.

> From the manifesto of 22 January 1975 issued by the SED Central Committee, the Council of State and the National Council of the National Front of the GDR to mark the 30th anniversary of liberation from Hitlerite fascism.

Basic changes in the balance of forces

The victory over fascism was an event of world-wide historic importance and had a decisive impact on the course of world developments. It showed that socialism is a dependable bastion of peace, democracy and social progress.

The victory of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War has convincingly demonstrated the vitality and invincibility of the world's first socialist state. It was a triumph of the new social and governmental system born in October 1917, a triumph of the socialist economy, the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, the political and moral unity of Soviet society, and of the indestructible friendship existing between the peoples of the USSR. This victory was won by the Soviet people who accomplished an unparalleled historic feat.

The crushing of German fascism and Japanese militarism led to the overthrow of reactionary regimes in a number of European and Asian countries and created favourable conditions for the struggle of the toiling masses for socialism. Successful revolutions in some European and Asian countries resulted in the emergence of the world socialist system, deepened the crisis of capitalism and accelerated the world-wide revolutionary process.

Owing to the basic changes in the balance of forces that had taken place in the international arena, imperialism lost the possibility of deciding unpunished the fate of the peoples. Today it must take account of the might of the socialist countries, their active foreign policy and the international solidarity of the forces of peace and progress.

A turn from the cold war to international détente and large-scale cooperation based on the principles of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems is taking place in the world. This turn has been brought about by the consistent implementation of the peace programme adopted at the XXIVth CPSU Congress and by the concerted policies of the fraternal socialist countries. These changes are borne out by an improvement of the situation in Europe and the political consolidation of the results of World War II and post-war developments.

From a decision of the CPSU Central Committee relating to the 30th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945